

## ASHBURTON URBAN DISTRICT

### ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31st, 1909.

Gentlemen,—

I have the pleasure of laying my eleventh Annual Report before you, and in it you will find, as usual, a resume of the general health of the district, the number of births and deaths, the number of zymotic diseases, and other matters of interest connected with the district.

As you are aware the district is somewhat triangular in shape, having the town of Ashburton in almost the centre of its base, which extends some miles in an easterly and westerly direction on either side of it, it is partially bounded by the River Dart and its tributary, the Yeo, and might be described as part Rural and part Urban. The acreage is 6,925 acres, and the population, according to the census of 1901, 2,660, but I am inclined to think that during the last few years there is a slight increase, owing, no doubt, to some mines working in the district.

**BIRTHS.**—During the year 1909 there were registered 50 births, five of which were illegitimate. Of this number 29 were girls and 21 boys. This number is 21 less than the previous year, 1908, when 71 births were registered. The average birth rate for the ten preceding years is 58.3, so it will be seen that there is a very serious diminution in the number of births this year.

**DEATHS.**—During the year 1909, 47 deaths were registered, 29 males and 18 females. Nine of the above number occurred in the Cottage Hospital, four belonging to the district and five from outside. If we take the whole of the deaths as belonging to the district the figures give a death rate of 17.6 per 1,000 of the population, but if we deduct the five from outside the district, it gives a death rate of 15.7 per 1,000. This, I consider, the fairer estimate to take. The average death rate for the past ten years is 17.8 per 1,000. Under the 1st year 5 deaths were registered, from the 1st to 5th year 2, from the 5th to the 15th year, 3, from the 15th to 25th year, 2, from the 25th to the 65th year 18, from the 65th year upwards 17, five of which exceeded 80 years. The death of one illegitimate was registered. The deaths were classified as follows:—Epidemic influenza, 1; enteritis, 1; phthisis (pulmonary tuberculosis), 4; other tubercular diseases, 1; cancer, 2; bronchitis, 8; pneumonia, 1; pleurisy, 2; premature birth, 1; heart disease, 6; suicide, 1; all other causes, 19. It will be noticed that no death has resulted from any of the notifiable diseases. The death rate among infants is still high, although less than the preceding year. As I have stated in previous reports, I believe many deaths are caused owing to the ignorance of those having care of them.

**NOTIFICATION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE ACT.**—Under this heading I have to report 12 cases, namely: Diphtheria, 8; erysipelas, 3; scarlet fever, 1. Four of the cases of diphtheria occurred in the same house, two of the cases also occurred in the same, and the other two in different houses. They were all of a mild type, and the disease never assumed an epidemic form. The cases of erysipelas and the case of scarlet fever were very mild, and call for no special comment.

**SLAUGHTER HOUSES** have been regularly inspected. It has been necessary in a few cases to find fault, but on the occupiers being acquainted the defects have been remedied, and on the whole they have been kept in a sanitary condition.

**DAIRIES** have been regularly inspected, and have always been found in a sanitary condition.

**COW HOUSES** have been regularly inspected, and have, with a few exceptions, been found in a sanitary condition.

**WATER SUPPLY** has during the year been satisfactory, both as regards quantity and quality. The rainfall during the year, taken by Mr. John Amery, at Druid, 584 feet above sea level, was 47.99 inches, the average for the past 44 years being 51.29 inches. The wettest months were December and October, when 8.39 and 10.60 inches fell, and the driest months were February and May, when .69 and 1.43 inches fell.

**COTTAGE ACCOMMODATION.**—A great deal of attention has been given in this direction, and I have to report a steady improvement in their sanitary condition. In old towns like Ashburton, some extra work is continually required, and it invariably receives attention, and is remedied as soon as possible. There are in the district 569 inhabited houses, with an average of 4.7 occupants per house. Several new houses have been erected, and where the byelaws have been complied with, the necessary certificates of occupation have been granted. It was found necessary in two instances to withhold the certificates until some necessary work was carried out.

**HOUSE REFUSE** is collected on alternate days. I regret the Council does not carry out my suggestion of having a covered cart for its removal.

**DISINFECTANTS** were, as in the past, freely used. Every house where there was a case of infectious disease was thoroughly disinfected.

**PROSECUTIONS.**—It was not found necessary to resort to legal proceedings.

**SCHOOLS.**—It was not found necessary to close the schools during the year.

**FACTORY AND WORKSHOP ACT.**—There is no large factory requiring special attention, but all bakeries and workshops have been inspected and found in a sanitary condition.

The most important works carried out during the year was the laying of 148 yards of new sewer in St. Lawrence Lane, 64 yards of new sewer in East-street, and 50ft. of new sewer in Back Lane, these, which were needed badly, will greatly add to the sanitary improvement of the town. In addition to the above several new drains have been laid, new closets erected, insanitary courts put in a sanitary condition, and numerous other minor improvements carried out.

I am pleased to say that the Sanitary Inspector has carried out his duties in a satisfactory manner.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

HENRY S. JOHNSON, M.O.H.

Totnes, February 7th, 1910.



